

**Proposed Modifications to Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Washington DC**

OPEN HOUSE

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

January 15, 2003
5:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.
Offices of the National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street, NW
Washington DC

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division
Sterling, Virginia

In cooperation with:

District of Columbia Department of Transportation
National Capital Planning Commission
Commission of Fine Arts
National Park Service

**PUBLIC SCOPING AND INFORMATION MEETING
JANUARY 15, 2003**

**MODIFICATIONS TO PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
BETWEEN 15TH AND 17TH STREETS, NW
WASHINGTON, DC**

Background

Pennsylvania Avenue (the Avenue) in front of the White House is a very historic and symbolic place; home and office of the president and, by extension, of the American people. The Avenue's route, between 15th and 17th Streets, was created by Thomas Jefferson to allow public access and use of the area now known as Lafayette Park. It is an important element in the White House setting, providing public access and generous open space and views. Its location establishes the orientation for other important buildings, monuments and public spaces in the Monumental Core.

The Avenue has been restricted for public vehicular traffic since May 1995, when the Secretary of the Treasury, following the recommendations of a panel charged with reviewing security at the White House, ordered the Avenue restricted to public vehicular traffic between 15th and 17th Streets, NW. Temporary barriers and control points were installed at the ends and along the east-west axis of the Avenue. Madison Place and Jackson Place were also restricted to public vehicular traffic. An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared by the Department of the Treasury for restricting public vehicular traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this restriction of public vehicular traffic was issued by the Department of the Treasury in September 1997.

In 2000 Congress authorized the National Capital Planning Commission (Commission) to examine proposals to remove the Avenue's public vehicular traffic restrictions. The Commission called upon experts in security, transportation, historic preservation and urban design to analyze current and future security needs of the area, debate the appropriateness of its closure, study past proposals for removing restrictions or permanently closing the Avenue to public vehicular traffic, and review beautification proposals prepared for the Avenue.

While many solutions that would allow for the removal of restrictions to public vehicular traffic on the Avenue were proposed and reviewed, the Commission concluded that due to numerous and legitimate security concerns, the Avenue should remain restricted for public vehicular traffic, until changes in the security threat or improvements to security technology will permit the Avenue to be reopened. In November 2001 the Commission concluded that temporary and permanent modifications to the Avenue are necessary to create a pedestrian precinct and a secure White House environment that is, in appearance and function, consistent with the values of our open, democratic society. The Commission adopted recommendations to create a landscaped civic space.

This decision was reached only after considerable debate and consensus on a number of programmatic requirements, agreed to by parties involved in providing input to the Commission.

Some of the key stakeholders that had input into this decision included the United States Secret Service, the National Park Service, the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Federal City Council and Congressional Members.

In 2002, Congress appropriated funding for the National Capital Planning Commission to develop the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan, which included Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. As the basis to proceed with Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, the Commission developed criteria by assembling the programmatic requirements adopted in the November, 1, 2001 report; the design criteria in the Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House; and the results of previous design efforts that had included extensive input from both national experts and the general public. These criteria covered security, the pedestrian environment, visual quality, historic character, circulation, as well as design guidelines for the White House and President's Park contained in the Comprehensive Design Plan.

As a first step in identifying the project purpose, need and scope, the Commission invited four of the country's leading landscape architecture and urban design firms to submit design ideas for creating a pedestrian-oriented landscaped civic space on the Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets. The Commission used this process as a means to choose a designer, not a final design concept. Review and comments on the submitted design ideas were solicited from the United States Secret Service, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the District of Columbia Department of Planning and Department of Transportation and the Federal City Council.

After a detailed review of the submitted ideas the Commission selected Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates as the firm to proceed to the next stage of design development for the temporary and permanent modifications to Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets NW. The Commission acknowledged that design ideas as presented must be modified, refined and coordinated with a wide range of affected public and private parties and stakeholders. Decision making for modifications to the Avenue will be accomplished through public processes identified in the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act

Actions taken by the Department of the Treasury in 1995 and 1997 to restrict public vehicular traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW, and Madison and Jackson Places, NW to public vehicular traffic will not be reevaluated for this project.

This January 15, 2003 public scoping and public information meeting is initiating the formal public involvement process for preparation of an environmental assessment and a request for interested groups and persons to indicate whether they wish to participate in the Section 106 historic preservation process under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The project is defined as the development and evaluation of alternatives to create a pedestrian-oriented, landscaped civic space on the Avenue and improve the appearance at H Street and

Jackson and Madison Places. This first meeting will provide an opportunity for all interested parties and persons to express their views and ask questions regarding the proposed temporary and permanent modifications to the project area. Alternatives will be developed and recommendations will be made once the comments submitted at this meeting are received, additional information is collected, and additional agencies and stakeholders are consulted. These recommendations will be made with full consideration of public comments, agency and stakeholder concerns and input, as well, as existing conditions including natural, cultural and aesthetic elements, security functions and operations.

Beginning on January 22, 2003 additional information can be found at www.epl.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/nepa

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this project is to create a pedestrian-oriented space on the segment of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW and improve the conditions at H Street and Jackson and Madison Places. The need for this project is to alter the current temporary appearance and function of the Avenue that was hastily installed as an emergency security measure in 1995.

Project Area

The project boundary is:

Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets NW:

Back side of sidewalk along its north side (except along Lafayette Park where it is the back of curb) and back side of sidewalk along its south side

Madison and Jackson Places from Pennsylvania Avenue to H Street NW:

Back side of curb along Jackson and Madison Places adjacent to Lafayette Park and the back of sidewalk on east side of Madison Place and west side of Jackson Place.



Tentative Schedule

- Public Scoping and Information Meeting to NEPA And NHPA January 15, 2002
- Additional Data Collection, Consultation with Agencies and Stakeholders, Compile Public Comments Jan. – Feb. 2003
- Compile data for Environmental Assessment (EA) Feb. - March 2003
- Notice Public Information Meeting for EA March 2003
- National Capital Planning Commission /Commission of Fine Arts Initial Concept Design Review March 2003
- Release of EA and 2nd Public Information Meeting, Present Recommendations for Temporary and Permanent Modifications to Pennsylvania Avenue April 2003
- Anticipated completion of Environmental Review and Determination May 2003
- Commission of Fine Arts Preliminary Site Plan Review May 2003
- National Capital Planning Commission Preliminary Site Plan Review June 2003
- Conclude Section 106 Process June 2003
- Begin Final Design July 2003
- National Capital Planning Commission Final Site Plan Review September 2003
- Begin Construction November 2003
- Complete Major Construction for 2005 Inaugural September 2004
- Complete Final Construction Activities June 2005

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE

INITIAL DESIGN IDEA | MAY 2002



Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.

1. The portion of Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and Lafayette Park has a ground plane surface comprised of a granular paving. This surface would be similar to that used in other renowned civic landscapes around the world.
2. The design includes a simple array of historic Washington light fixtures, stone benches, and discreet bollards.
3. Plan of the Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW.
4. The design creates a pedestrian precinct that preserves the historical axis and existing street pattern while creating an environment that is welcoming, dignified, and able to accommodate multiple uses, including the inaugural parade.
5. Section through the Avenue on the N-S axis of the White House.

PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

Development and evaluation of temporary and permanent modifications to Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW to create a pedestrian oriented space is being coordinated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in cooperation with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, and the Commission of Fine Arts. Considerable work has yet to be accomplished before final recommendations are made for any modifications. The needs and comments of local residents, interest groups, stakeholders and public agencies are important considerations for this project. Please feel free to submit any concern or comment utilizing this form. We ask that you please submit your comments to the address provided below by **February 3, 2003**.

Please print clearly

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street	Apt./Suite	City	State	Zip
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Email address

Comments: _____

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- ☐ If you want to be included on our mailing list to be notified of future meetings please check the box.
- ☐ If you want to participate in the historic preservation Section 106 review process, please check the box.

For further information, please contact:

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